

**A DETAILED STUDY OF THE
RUSSO-POLISH WAR 1920
3RD PHASE
THE BATTLE OF THE VISTULA**

BY

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CAPTAIN, INFANTRY**

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I-N-T-R-O-D-U-C-T-I-O-N

The causes of the Russian-Polish war that began in December 1918 and ended in October 1920, must be sought on the one hand in the policy of the Soviet leaders to spread Bolshevism throughout the world, and especially to infect Poland with it and on the other hand in the determination of Poland to resist all attempts at overthrowing its social order and at the same time to obtain an advantageous frontier in the East. The decisive battle was the battle of the Vistula. It is a splendid example of maneuver in open warfare.

Since Marshall Pilsudski is undeniably the author of the maneuver that freed Poland and since Toukhatchevsky, the Russian Commander, made all the decisions concerning his forces, it is believed that a brief resume of their characters will give an added insight to this battle or maneuver of the Vistula.

MARSHAL PILSUDSKI

Born in 1867, of a family of wealthy land owners in the suburbs of Biala, of noble origin, Joseph Pilsudski received from his parents a careful education. He ~~knows~~^{spoke} thoroughly French, German, Russian and English, and ~~is~~^{was} acquainted with the White-Ruthenian and the Ukrainian dialects.

The bloody repression of the Polish insurrection of 1863 half ruined the Pilsudski family, who had to move into Vilna. It soon became there one of the centers of Polish patriotism. There Joseph Pilsudski grew up. While still a child he dreamed of one day being the liberator of Poland. He devoured the lives of Napoleon and of the popular Polish heroes: Sobieski and Kosciuszko.

His preparatory studies completed, Pilsudski entered the medical school at Charkov. A little while afterwards, that school was closed.

His brother was implicated in a plot against the Tsar Alexander II. His innocence was recognized, but he was nevertheless condemned to twenty-five years of hard labor. Joseph Pilsudski, as being the brother of a convict, was banished to Siberia for five years.

There he established contact with individuals of all Russian levels of society. Liberated, he founded an organization to throw off the Russian oppression, and in order to exert an influence over the masses, he created the Polish Socialist party.

Imprisoned, he escaped, thanks to the assistance of a doctor, and took part in the revolution of 1905, leading the young workers. A refugee in Galicia (Austrian Poland), he organized -- the Austrian authorities shutting their eyes because the enemy contemplated was Russia -- clubs of riflemen.

Among his collaborators at that time were Sosnkowski and Rydz-Smigley, who were later among his best generals.

When the world war broke out, Pilsudski went boldly with his riflemen into Russian Poland. "In order to reconstitute Poland," he said, "it is first necessary to defeat Russia."

As soon as he saw Russia weakened, he turned his activity against Germany and Austria.

In October, 1914, he formed a secret association of officers and non-commissioned officer, "The Polish Military Organization P.O.W."

After a series of adventures which it would take too long to tell, Pilsudski, General of a brigade, was captured and confined, as was also Colonel Sosnkowski, at Magdebourg.

In August, 1918, General Rydz-Smigley, who had replaced Pilsudski at the head of the P.O.W. met at Moscow General Lavergne, chief of the French military mission in Russia, and made an alliance with the Allies against the Central Powers.

The members of the P.O.W. were thenceforth used to blow up the bridges on the German and Austrian communicating railways.

2 On November 6, 1918, the independence of the Polish republic was proclaimed at Lublin. Pilsudski, freed from prison by the German revolutionists, soon arrived at Warsaw, already liberated from the German occupation.

With the men of the P.O.W., he completed the disarming of the German garrisons. Later on, he made an agreement with the German General Staff for the organization of the retreat, across Poland, of 400,000 German soldiers, stationed in Ukraina.

He formed the Polish government, of which he was given the Presidency, at Moraczewski.

Having a dictatorial power, Pilsudski called together a constitutional assembly, which unanimously proclaimed him Head of the State.

From that moment, Pilsudski, knowing that Poland would have to defend its restoration by force, applied himself with a passionate ardor to the creation of a strong army. He had to assist him in this task General Sosnkowski, his constant comrade in strife, and later on General Henrys with the French Mission.

But how many were the difficulties, both from the point of view of the personnel and from the point of view of the materiel!

In 1920 Pilsudski was fifty three years of age. He was a man of average height, well built, slightly stooped, with bushy eyebrows, keen and penetrating eyes, and a drooping moustache.

We would like to be informed as to his military education. This much is known but only, through his intimate friends, that it was in 1908 that he undertook the methodical study of the Napoleonic wars. He certainly well understood the Napoleonic maneuver on the rear of the adversary.

In 1920, he had the incomparable advantage of being, at the same time at which he was Commander in Chief, also the Head of the State. That did not lessen his responsibility, but he was accustomed, during long years, to know how to assume it. (1)

(1)
Cemon P.5

GENERAL TOUKHATSCHIEVSKI

The troops on the northern front were commanded by a young General of twenty eight years, Toukhatschevski, a graduate of the corps of cadets. He was a second lieutenant in the Semenovski regiment of the Guard when the World War broke out. He made a good figure in numerous combats. Made prisoner in 1917, he succeeded in escaping. In March, 1918, he went to offer his services to Trotsky. If he had not yet read Karl Marx, he had, M. Fervacques tells us, the revolutionary instinct. He was at that time a tall, and hollow ^{man}, his hair black and smooth, recalling the portrait of Napoleon with the Army of Italy. He believed neither in God nor the Devil, but he was of a fierce ambition. He lacked a sound technical training. (2)

(2)

Canon P. 9

IMPORTANCE OF THE BATTLE OF THE VISTULA

The battle of the Vistula, the battle of Warsaw, or the maneuver of the Vistula, has been called the 18th decisive battle of the world. If Sedan was the 16th, Marne the 17th, according to Creasy, then Warsaw was the 18th. The determining factor is whether the drama of the world would have essentially varied had the Poles been defeated.

A brief resume of the state of Europe at that time will help us appreciate the importance of this battle.

GERMANY: Spartacist outrages, communist revolts, Bavaria for a moment in the hands of the revolutionists.

AUSTRIA: Still in effervescence following the revolutionary attempt of Steinhart.

HUNGARY: The communist revolution had left deep traces.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA: A revolutionary plot was in progress to overthrow the government.

ITALY: Italy was the prey of constant strikes. Committees of workers had already taken possession of the factories preparing the way for the social revolutionists.

ENGLAND: The Soviets were endeavoring to take advantage of numerous serious strikes in order to inject their pernicious philosophy and destructive ferments.

G. V. Saint Dizier states:

"We, French officers who were at this period with the Polish armies, felt the gravity of the danger which menaced Western Europe and France If the battle which was about to be fought on the Vistula were lost by the Poles, the fate of Europe as established by the new treaties would be compromised." (3)

The government of the Soviets were fixed in their determination to exploit their anticipated victory. General Taukhat-shevski, the general of the red armies, in his narrative of the situation states:

"The working classes of Eastern Europe, on hearing the news of the Soviet advance, were greatly stirred. The nationalistic catch-words invented by the Polish Bourgeoisie could not mask the real fact that a class war was being waged. That feeling stirred both the proletariat and the Bourgeoisie of Europe and a revolutionary thrill ran through the world. There is not the slightest doubt that, if we had succeeded in breaking the Polish army the revolution of the working class in Poland would have been an accomplished fact. The tempest would not have stopped at the Polish frontier. Like a furious torrent it would have swept over the whole of Eastern Europe." (4)

(4)
D' Abernon
P. 167-168

Lord D'Abernon (the British ambassador in Berlin) who was in Poland as a Special Envoy to His Majesty's Government, in conjunction with the French Mission states:

"The history of contemporary civilization knows of no event of greater importance than the Battle of Warsaw, 1920, and none of which the significance is less appreciated. The danger menacing Europe at that time was parried, and the whole episode forgotten. Had the battle been a Bolshevik victory, it would have been a turning-point in European history, for there is no doubt at all that the whole of Central Europe would at that moment have been opened to the influence of Communist propaganda, and to Soviet invasion, which it could with difficulty have resisted." (5)

(5)
Machray P.165

OPPOSING FORCES, COMPOSITION, MORALE AND TRAINING

POLISH ARMY.

The greater number of the units came from the amalgamation of men who had belonged to the Russian, German and Austrian armies. The Polish Legions, who had served on the Austrian side were homogenous and possessed excellent morale. In addition, there were six divisions recruited in France from American volunteers of Polish origin.

ARMAMENT: Since each division had brought its own material during its formation period there were all kinds of models of old and new making the supply of them exceedingly difficult. The organic artillery of the divisions varied between 6 and 8 batteries. There were no corps artillery.

TRAINING: There was an extraordinary lack of training. The Polish army in general gave the impression of an assembly of recruits. Many scarcely knew how to handle their rifles. But they had unusual endurance, bravery and enthusiasm when aroused. There were not sufficient trained personnel available to officer all the units. In the armies, only the chief of staffs larger than a division were commissioned. All other positions were of necessity entrusted to improvised personnel or the young students of the Polish Higher School of War, whose training had been reduced to three months.

MUNITIONS: There was no munition factory in Poland. It was necessary to count on shipments from France or captures from the enemy.

(6)
Canon P.8 & 9.
Faury P.3 & 4.

RUSSIAN ARMY: The Russians were no better prepared. There was present the same absence of training, the same lack of officers. They were a little better off as regards munitions and material.(6)
MORALE: The essential difference between the Russian and the Polish armies was that of morale. The Poles were fighting to save their country. The mass of the Bolsheviks were recruited from the peasant class. They wished for peace and rest. In order to arouse them they were made promises of pillage.

NUMBER OF MEN ENGAGED:

On July 4th, according to Toukhatschevski, the opposing forces were as follows:

(7)
Canon P. 7

Russians: 160,000 men
Poles: 95,000 men (7)

We should not become impressed with the term army as used by both sides. The Russians had six "armies" besides their cavalry forces over which this total of 160,000 men were distributed. The Poles likewise had six "armies" besides various other groups.

(8)
Canon P. 10

SUPPLY: The method of supply of the Russian Army deserves special mention. Toukhatschevski did not concern himself with a supply system as we know it. His was rather simpler; as for munitions, he expended only a small quantity, as for rations, he found them in the country. Each army was followed by about 10,000 carts taken from the peasants. (8)

Thus we see a contest between two improvised, poorly trained armies. We must not lose sight of this important fact.

THE THEATER OF OPERATIONS

The theater of operations extended, as a matter of fact, between the Vistula, the Bug, and the Narew.

These water courses have a considerable importance in it.

The confluence, near Modlin, of the Bug-Narew with the Vistula, forms one of the most important hydrographic knots. It is a sort of a fan, of which the Vistula, the Bug-Narew, and their affluents form the rays.

The Vistula from Warsaw to Danblin (confluent of the Wieprz); the Bug from Serock to Brest-Litewski (where it touches the marshes of Polesia); the Narew, from Ostrolenka up to the north of Bielsk, have parallel courses.

Map No. 1

The Vistula, from Danblin (Ivanogorod) to Warsaw has a width which averages 1,000 meters, and a depth which exceeds $1\frac{1}{2}$ meters. There is no ford at all.

The entrenched Camp of Danblin, built by the Russians on the confluent of the Wieprz, does not protect that confluent, but nevertheless it protects its approaches from the south.

The Warsaw Bridge Head is strong, on account of the marshes which surround it. It stretches over a distance of 45 kilometers, from Serock to Karczew.

Modlin, situated at the emptying of the Nara into the Bug-Narew, and of the confluents of the Bug-Narew with the Vistula, is an old city which dominates all the vicinity from its lofty site on the right bank of the Bug-Narew.

The fork of the Bug-Narew and the Vistula is closed by a series of forts distributed in two lines, which form the fortified position of Novo-Georgievski, which played an important part during the World War.

In spite of the partial destruction of the entrenched camp, the interior forts still constituted, in 1920, a strong line of resistance. According to General Sikorski, there remained a great deal to be done, when he arrived on August 10, in order to put the place in good state of defense:

"The fortress had not been properly put in condition for defense, and its garrison was of problematical value. The security battalions, the garrison, was composed of volunteers without any training. The artillery was chiefly made up of material very interesting for historical museums, but of no use whatever for war; extraordinarily ill-assorted, without horses, without a stock of munitions, without an aiming apparatus. It had a moral value only for those who were ignorant of the true state of affairs."

The Bolsheviks were in that situation.

The marshes of the confluents Wkra, Bug, and Narew, increased the defensive value of that region:

At its confluence, the Bug-Narew is 300 meters wide.

To the west of Modlin, the Vistula narrows down to as little as 400 meters, at certain points at Plock, and at Wloclawek.

We have said above that the Narew, the Bug, and the Vistula had courses in general parallel.

The Bug has throughout its course an average width of 150 meters, and an average depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ meters. But in all, there are

in this sector some twenty fords under 1 meter. The valley of the Bug is wide: 2 to 5 kilometers and often marshy.

It has a sandy bottom, a gentle current, and average depth of less than one meter, a width reaching 60 meters far down the stream, and flat banks. It can be crossed almost everywhere, and it is easy to bridge. It is not a serious obstacle for cavalry, and hardly hinders the movements of artillery. Its east bank is covered with small woods.

ROADS: The roads which converge on Warsaw are:

Augustowo-Lomza-Ostrolenka

Orodno-Ossowiec.

Ostrow-Wyszkow-Radzymin.

{ Ostrow

Orodno-Bialystok-(

(Bielsh

Baranowicz-Bresc-Biala- { Kock-Demblin

{ Lublin.

RAILWAYS: Three large railways built by the Russians before the World War for mobilization purposes, converge on the sector Warsaw - Demblin.

Vilna-Bialystok-Warsaw-Molodeczno-Solkowsyk,
Siedlce-Minsk-Baranowicze-Brzest-Biala-Lukow-Lublin-Demblin.

A transversal road, Warsaw-Minsk-Maziowiecki-Siedlce-Lukow-Lublin, connected these three converging roads.

As a matter of fact, these railways, put out of service by the Poles, were of no use to the Bolsheviks.

A railway from Dantzic to Bydgoszcz (Bromberg), Torun (Thorn), Wloclawek, Lowicz, Warsaw, connected the capital of

(9)
Canon P. 23. Poland with the sea. (9)

SITUATION PRIOR TO AUGUST 6TH

In order to appreciate the conditions under which Pilsudski adopted the plan of August 6th, for the battle of the Vistula, and likewise, to understand the ideas underlying the Russian plan of attack, made at the same time the Polish plan was conceived, it is necessary to review briefly the events prior to August 6th. See Map No. 2, and Map No. 2, for the situation up to August 5th.

On August 2nd we find Pilsudski at Warsaw. He is contemplating whether or not Poland will perish. For a whole month the Polish troops have been giving way under the relentless drive of the Bolshevik attacks, a distance of 600 kilometers. (10) He sees the cause for the past defeats and most of all he seeks a remedy. See Map

The cause is clear. During July the Poles had been fighting passively on indefinite lines. On July 4th the northern group of the Soviet armies attacked in a disposition depth. The Polish cordon, severed at the first shock, was definitely broken. The Poles who had studied the mistakes of Kuropatkin, who had lost battles without using intact reserves, were determined not to do likewise. Furthermore, they refused to listen to the advice of the French who warned them of the dangers of not echeloning in depth.

An idea may be obtained of the difference of dispositions when we see that on July 20th, out of a total of 45 Russian divisions, 15 were in reserve, whereas the Poles had only three in reserve out of a total of 23. (11) Faury P. 4.

The Poles because of successive defeats and their lack of reserves, were in a critical condition. The Polish command had been retreating. As a direct cause of this retreat the Polish command had time neither to change their dispositions, or prepare for a battle.

However, the respite which the actions brought on the Bug have given the Polish armies, permits Pilsudski to prepare a maneuver, to free himself of the pressure imposed on him by continuous retreat and to regroup his forces.

On August 4th, General Weygand, Chief of the French Military Mission established in Poland, advised establishing a solid front, powerful enough and far enough in the interior of the country, so as to be able to reconstitute important reserves and then commit them to a counter-offensive for the two wings.

He estimated Warsaw was in danger of being outflanked from the north and recommended the creation of a powerful army for the north wing.

(12)
Sikoraki P.S. Pilsudski however, was not in agreement with Weygand as will be brought out later. (12)

RUSSIAN SITUATION - AUGUST 6TH.

PRINCIPAL FRONT: Commander-in-Chief, Toukhatschevski.

IV ARMY: 4 divisions plus 1 bridge plus Gaja Cavalry Corps, 140 guns. It takes Ostrolenka.

XV ARMY: 4 divisions, 140 guns, between the Bug and the Narew. It is advancing on Pultusk.

III ARMY: 4 divisions plus 1 brigade, 100 guns. It is along the Bug, which it crosses at Drohiczyn.

XVI ARMY: 5 divisions, 200 guns. It is along the Bug, which it endeavors to cross at Yanow.

MOSYR FORCE: 2 divisions, 50 guns. It is at Brzesc-Litcwaki.

SECONDARY FRONT:

See Map 2

In Wolhynia: XII Army, 4 divisions. It is in the area Brody-Wladimir-Wolynaki.

In Eastern Galicia: Cavalry army of Budienny and XIV Army.

The Bolchevist troops, although fatigued by their pursuit, see the end of their efforts in sight. They already count upon the sack of Warsaw. They are reinforced by recruits and by demobilized soldiers drawn from White Russia. Shipments of munitions reach the Bug, not only from the interior of Russia, but even from Germany and Lithuania. Thousands of Prussian volunteers, Spartacists and others enlist in the Bolchevist ranks and make up a brigade of German riflemen. The morale is very high. The Soviet Command is sure, too sure of victory. It considers the Polish Army as already beaten and disorganized in advance. It does not expect a serious resistance before Warsaw and counts upon an easy entry into the Polish Capital. (13)

(13)
St. Dizier
P. 84

POLISH SITUATION - AUGUST 6TH

The northeastern front is commanded by General Joseph Haller, replacing General Szeptycki, and is divided into four parts:

(1) In the north, General Roja, with his detachments of Posen men, has just lost Ostroleka and retires to Rozan.

(2) The 1st Army has orders to maintain itself in the area Ostrow-Malkin and to defend the crossing of the Bug.

(3) The 4th Army, on the Bug, holds the crossings from Granne to Nemir.

(4) The Polesia Force contains the enemy west of Brzesco-Litowski and Yanow.

On the southern front are located:

See Map. 2 and 3

(1) The 3d Army, which contains the XII Bolchevist Army in the area west of Kowel.

(2) The 6th Army in eastern Galicia, which is to cover Lwow and which rests upon the lines of Sokal; a cavalry division.

The armies on the northeast front are at the end of their strength, especially the 1st Army, which has received the principal blows of the enemy. In this army, during this retreat, without halt, for over a month, the tactical and mechanical connections are broken. The soldiers and many of the leaders are demoralized in the highest degree. A large number of deserters have fled to the Capital and have taken refuge there without being disturbed. The roads are covered with trains in flight, batteries of artillery being mingled with these trains. The 11th Division, completely disorganized and having had an enormous proportion of deserters, is reorganizing first at Ostrow, then at Radzymin.

In the 4th Army, the morale is better and the disorder less great. The 14th and 15th Divisions, composed of Posen men, and the 9th Divisions, have retained a certain fighting power.

The troops of the southern front are in much better condition. They have had to fight less intensively and have retired, obeying orders received. Particularly the 1st and 3rd Divisions of the Legions, and the 18th Division, have a good spirit and are ready to measure themselves with the enemy. (14)

(14)
St. Dizier P. 86

PILSUDSKI DECISION: Pilsudski realizing the necessity for a regroupment of the forces decided to transfer the northeast front to the Vistula line and accept a general battle at Warsaw. His plan was to protect with minimum forces Lwow and the Polish oil fields, to wear the enemy out with prolonged combat at the Warsaw bridgehead, to prevent being outflanked along the German frontier, and to assemble secretly an army of maneuver on the lower Wieprz for the purpose of attacking in flank and rear the forces that would assault Warsaw in order to decisively defeat them.

He issued the following order which is quoted in detail as it is the basis of the Polish maneuver:-

REGROUPING ORDER

The rapid progress of the enemy into the interior of the country and their violent efforts to cross the Bug and march upon Varsovia, lead the Commander in Chief to transfer the front north-east to the line of the Vistula and to accept a general battle at Varsovia.

Map No 2 and 3

I. The Commander in Chief has chosen as a principal line of defense, the Orzyc-Narew Rivers with bridge heads at Varsovia-Vistula, Demblin-Wieprz, and another more to the south on the Seret or the

Strypa. This line permits our troops to form in preparing and attacking the flanks and communications of the enemy in the course of their progress.

The terrain, the organization and the objectives of the enemy, and our own plans divide this front into three principal parts:-

- a. North front, from the German frontier to the bridgehead of Demblin exclusive.
- b. Center front, from Demblin inclusive, to Brody exclusive.
- c. South front, from Brody inclusive, south to the frontier of the country.

II. The plan of maneuver of the Commander in Chief for the opening period was:

- a. On the south, fix the enemy by covering Lwow and poisoning the wells.
- b. On the north, prevent the enemy from outflanking us along the German frontier, weaken him by inflicting bloody counter-checks in front of the bridge heads of Warsaw which he would attack.
- c. The center had an offensive mission, to assemble rapidly an army of maneuver on the lower Wieprz and afterwards throw it on the flanks and rear of the enemy attacking Warsaw and defeat it. A grouping having an organic existence of its own, on the upper Wieprz had the initial mission of screening to the east and south, covering the concentration of the army of maneuver, and afterwards to participate in the action with the army of maneuver in a northeast direction. The co-operation of the forces of the north front had to be considered.

III. Characteristics and Missions of the Sectors:

a. North, under command of Army Commander Haller.

The north is the most menaced as the intention of the enemy is to take the capitol, either by attacking it in front or outflanking it from the north, or to try to force the Vistula to the south of Varsovia. The north sector is subdivided into three sub-sectors:

- (1) From the German frontier to Pultusk inclusive, sub-sector of the 5th Army commanded by Major General Sikorski. Its mission was to hold the passes of the Narew, the Narew and the Orzyc, to have its cavalry operate the right wing of the enemy. To prevent all efforts of the enemy to break through.
- (2) From Serock inclusive, to Karczew inclusive and bridge head at Varsovia, sub-sector of the 1st Army commanded by Major General Latinik actually military governor of Varsovia. Its mission was to repulse the attacks upon Varsovia and inflict the greatest losses possible upon the enemy, with the idea of weakening his power of resistance.
- (3) From Gora Kalwarja inclusive, Demblin exclusive, sub-sector of the 2nd Army, commanded by Division Commander Raszewski, its mission was to watch and hold the line of the Vistula.

b. Center, commanded by Division Commander Rydz-

Smigly. It will constitute the group of maneuver that will benefit from the weakening of the enemy, as a result of his attacks on the bridge head at Warsaw, and it will also benefit from the regrouping of our wings so as to be able to inflict a decisive defeat upon the principal enemy forces. That sector was divided into two sub-sectors;

- (1) From Damblin inclusive, to Kock inclusive, sub-sector of the 4th Army the principal attack unit, commanded by Major General Skierski. Its mission, to concentrate in the region Damblin-Lysobyski-Kock, and to attack in the general direction of Minsk, Mazowiecki, with reserves echeloned in depth.
- (2) From Kock exclusive, to Prody exclusive, sub-sector of the 3rd Army, commanded by Division Commander Zielinski. Its mission is at first to cover the concentration of the 4th Army, to hold out the enemy by use of its own cavalry; later when the 4th Army launches its attack, to have its infantry attack in echelon in the direction of Lukow covered on the east by the cavalry.

c. South, commanded by Army Commander Muanicki. Its mission the protection of Little Oriental Poland from the direction of Hrubieszow-Rawa-Ruska. It has two sub-sectors:

(1) From Brody inclusive to the frontier, the Commander in Chief did not define any more sub-sectors for the 6th Army commanded by Division Commander Iwaszkiewicz.

(2) South part of the front to be occupied by the Army of General Pawlenko.

IV. General Prescriptions:

- a. Break contact at night. On the first night execute a very long march, leaving only small rear guards of cavalry or infantry transported in vehicles with machine guns, which will remain in place, but which will be removed before the enemy can attack in force. These indications concern principally the polesie group and the actual 4th Army.
- b. Begin immediately to evacuate the parks, convoys and service establishments, taking into account the limited number of passages on the Vistula and Wieprz. Maintain order in the columns of vehicles so they will not obstruct the roads and passages.
- c. Make an effort to have the units changing assignments fall back immediately after according to the order of battle, march them away so the roads will be clear afterwards for the retiring troops.
- d. Occupy the new sectors at night on the proper time and in order, especially the bridge head at Warsaw on the Vistula. Detailed instructions will be given with that in view by the commandant of the north front after conferring with General Latinik.

e. In the new sectors, the divisions will resume order promptly and absorb such available reinforcements as volunteer and marching battalions; take that into account.

f. The following passages exist on the Vistula:

Iron bridges: Modlin-Varsovia (regulated as road traffic) Dmblin, Sandomir.

Pile bridges: Varsovia, Dmblin.

Wooden Bridges: Pulawy-Annopol.

Heavy boat bridge: Modlin.

Under construction:

At Varsovia, a light boat bridge will be ready on the 12th of August.

At Gora Kalwarja, a makeshift bridge on boats will be ready on the 15th of August.

Steam ferry boats will operate at Jablonna and Gora Kalwarja from the 8th of August.

V. Execution:

a. The retreat of the armies of the northeast front will begin during the night of August 7th. It must be executed in such a manner that General Roja's group, especially the left wing of the 1st Army will delay as long as possible any push of the enemy in the direction of Malkin-Varsovia, and absolutely prevent them from assaulting the covering forces in the bridge head position covering Varsovia, until August 12th, the date the defenses of those positions will be completed.

With that in view, the left of the 1st Army must remain in line with Wyszkw, until the rest of the front to the south has reached the line of the Liwiec-Snedlec-Lukow-Torkawic and Wieprz rivers. During the rest of the retreat, the troops from the Varsovia

bridge head must repulse all attacks by the enemy, until the concentration of the 4th Army south of the Wieprz is completed, or until about the 16th of August.

The left of the 3rd Army will retire to the line of the Wieprz in contact with the Polesie group in such a manner that the troops will be in line with the rear guards of the Polesie group whose retreat it will also protect. The commandants of those two fronts will agree on the details of execution of that retirement.

The new order of battle will be in effect at the moment when the retreating units reach their definite positions and the outposts have fallen back; the 4th Army will remain under orders of General Haller until the end of the concentration.

b. Regrouping of troops during the retirement:- The sectors of the different armies are indicated in paragraph III.

(1) The 5th Army will receive, besides General Roja's group, units from the north wing (~~see order of battle~~) and the 17th Infantry division from the northeast front and whose commandant will settle the transport in the Pultusk region as soon as possible.

(2) The 1st Army in the bridge head at Warsaw will have at its disposal, in addition to the retreating units of the 1st Army and the 15th Infantry Division:

a. The 11th Infantry Division and 7th Reserve Brigade, both being reorganized.

b. The 6th Infantry Division, whose brigades will be withdrawn from the front without delay and transported to Demblin by rail without control of the commandants of the north-east and southeast fronts.

(5) The 3rd Army will include the 6th Ukrainian Division, the 7th Division of General Bala-chowicz's troops, a cavalry brigade and the 3d Divisions of the Legions.

(6) The 6th Army will include the 13th and 5th Divisions, a cavalry brigade and the army of General Pawlenko. (15)

(15)
Sikoraki

(16)
Sikoraki P. 9

Comment: In attacking Warsaw from the east or northeast, the Vistula, the Narew and the Bug and their tributaries form a serious obstacle. Pilsudski based his order of the 6th on the assumption that the Russian principal attack would be developed south of the Bug, that the Russian Armies in marching north of the Bialystok-Warsaw route would pass to the south of the Bug at Malkin Brok or at Wyszkw. (16)

Two directions for the Russian advance were considered that of Bialystok-Warsaw and that of Brest-Warsaw. A secondary attack on the north of the Bug-Narew with an effort to outflank the Polish left wing from the north along the German frontier was not seriously thought of and was a matter of conjecture only. Pilsudski has overlooked the enemy's capabilities in this direction and allowed the terrain to influence his judgment to the extent that he practically disregards this as a likely Russian main effort. Pilsudski was convinced that the majority of the Russian forces were to be used in an concentric attack on Warsaw.

This plan involved great risks. There was present the danger of losing Lwow, the oil fields and the greater danger of an attack by Budienny on the rear of the maneuvering force grouping behind the wieprz. Only one army, the 6th, was left to hold against the cavalry of Budienny and the 14th Soviet Army. Prompt action by this force could have destroyed Pilsudski's plan.

The plan had a good chance of success if (1) the Russian main effort comes where Pilsudski expects it. (2) If the 3rd and 6th Armies can accomplish their holding missions.

A further analysis of this plan shows Pilsudski's mass concentrated in the vicinity of Warsaw with his flanks comparatively weak. According to von Schlieffen, he has violated the principles

THE SOVIET PLAN OF ATTACK

Let us leave Pilsudski while he is busy regrouping his forces and examine the plan of attack as given by Toukhatschevski. He gives the following as an explanation of his maneuver:

"In seeking the proper direction of attack for the principal effort it was necessary to take into account not only the tactical aspects of the battle but also to think to block the principal and vital lines of communication of the enemy;

To direct the attack on the center, in the very direction of Warsaw was a task beyond our strength. There remained only the task of seeking the annihilation of one of the wings. By attacking the right wing we would threaten the enemy's principal line of communication with Dantzig;

Another advantage was in order to carry out his maneuver we would not have to be regrouped. This enabled us to gain time. Furthermore, we did not have to change our line of communications which ran from Lida toward Warsaw. We did not have sufficient strength to attack both flanks." (17)

(17)
St. Dizier P.89

Consequently on August 3th, Toukhatschevski ordered as follows:

"The principal attack will be made in the area north of

Warsaw.

The 4th Army covering itself in the direction of Thorn will cross the Vistula with its main body in the vicinity of Plock.

The 15th Army in the vicinity of Wyszegrod.

The 3rd Army in the vicinity of Modlin

Map No 4 }
Map No 5 }
Shows the situation
on Aug 12 and 15,
which illustrates
the Soviet plan
as conceived on
Aug 8.
Compares with
Map 2, (situation Aug 6)

The XVI Army covering itself in the direction Garwolin will cross the Vistula in the vicinity of Gera Kalvarga, south of Warsaw.

The Kosyr force will continue its attacks so as to cross the Vistula in the vicinity of Demblin. It will be reinforced by the 58th Division from the southern front.

(18)
St. Dizier P.90 In this manner adds Toukhatshevski, we directed 14 divisions and the 3rd Cavalry Corps against the Polish left wing. (18)

Comment: Toukhatshevski is evidently of the opinion that the bulk of the Polish forces are concentrated around Warsaw. In this he is correct. He has determined to make a wide turning movement around the Polish left flank. This seems to be the logical thing to do in this situation. If he protects his lines of communication and his own left flank, which he should be able to do by means of his 12th Army and the cavalry of Budienny, he should be assured of success. He has massed his forces at a decisive point. He has a numerical superiority. We know Pilsudski does not expect a maneuver and that he is not prepared to meet it. This gives the added advantage of surprise. There is only one drawback to the plan and that is the danger of dispersion in making the turning movement. The situation is very similar to that of the Germans and French on the Marne. The Germans lost this battle because their right flank was not strong. Toukhatshevski seems to have learned the proper answer to this situation and has heeded the dying whisper of von Schlieffen to the German General Staff - "Make the right strong."

CHANGES IN THE POLISH PLAN AS GIVEN

IN THE ORDER OF AUGUST 6TH

On August 6th the Polish High Command was still of the opinion that the mass of the Russian Forces were concentrating on Warsaw. At that time the mission of the 5th Army was primarily a defensive mission. The following telephone conversation held over direct wire between the Chief of the Operations Section of the Commander-in-Chief and the Commander of the North-east Front, on 8th August, at 6:30 P.M.:

General Haller: I would like to speak to General Rozwadowski about the new situation confronting my left. As you know, the greater part of the enemy's divisions are dispersed along the line of advance leading in the direction of Ciechanow and Mlawa. It appears to me that it will be possible to launch an attack with prospects of success, particularly at the time when the hostile forces will again be moving westward. Such a thrust executed from the north with two divisions is apt to create considerable confusion. I believe that the direction from Pultusk to Makow or even somewhat to the west of these points would be suitable.

Colonel Pisor: Congratulations, General! At a recent conference of the Commander-in-Chief, the Chief of Staff and General Weygand, it was decided to paralyze the westward movement of the enemy Fourth Army by striking him from the area Modlin - Pultusk, precisely as you suggest. With this object in view, the 18th Division has been ordered to Modlin; its leading echelons will arrive there by midnight. Moreover, the Siberian Brigade has been directed from Skierniewice to Zegrze, and is already on its way with part of its forces; from Zegrze it will proceed to Pultusk. In addition, two cavalry regiments are being entrained in the south.

On the morning of the 11th, the entire group will be ready to launch its attack, it being proposed that the main effort be made on the left flank. Pultusk will constitute the axis of this movement. Our object is to defeat the Russian Fourth Army, and then to reach the line Omulew - Rozan - Zegrze. This, on the one hand, will render our left flank, as well as our communications with Danzig secure, and on the other hand, will permit striking at the rear lines of the Bolshevik forces that are marching on Warsaw.

General Haller: Fine! I am glad that it has been decided in this fashion.

PLAN FOR A DOUBLE FLANKING OPERATION

In connection with the above conversation the 5th Army under General Sikorski, on August 10th received the following order:

The 5th Army has the mission to prevent the enemy from making any further progress in the area between Modlin - Mlawa, and keeping the enemy from reaching Pomorze. Ultimately, the mission of this army will consist in launching an attack against the enemy's left, with a view to effecting a partial envelopment in the north, and driving the enemy from the Narew southward.

The 4th Army will be prepared to launch a vigorous attack either along the Vistula in the direction Minak - Kaluszyn, or farther eastward on Lukow - Siedlice.

The 2d Army will be prepared either, a. to cross the Vistula near Warsaw, and advance in conjunction with the 4th Army on Okuniew, or b. to force a passage of the Vistula at

at Ryczjew and thus ease the situation of the 4th Army and, in cooperation with it, to march by way of Omieck on Pinsk.

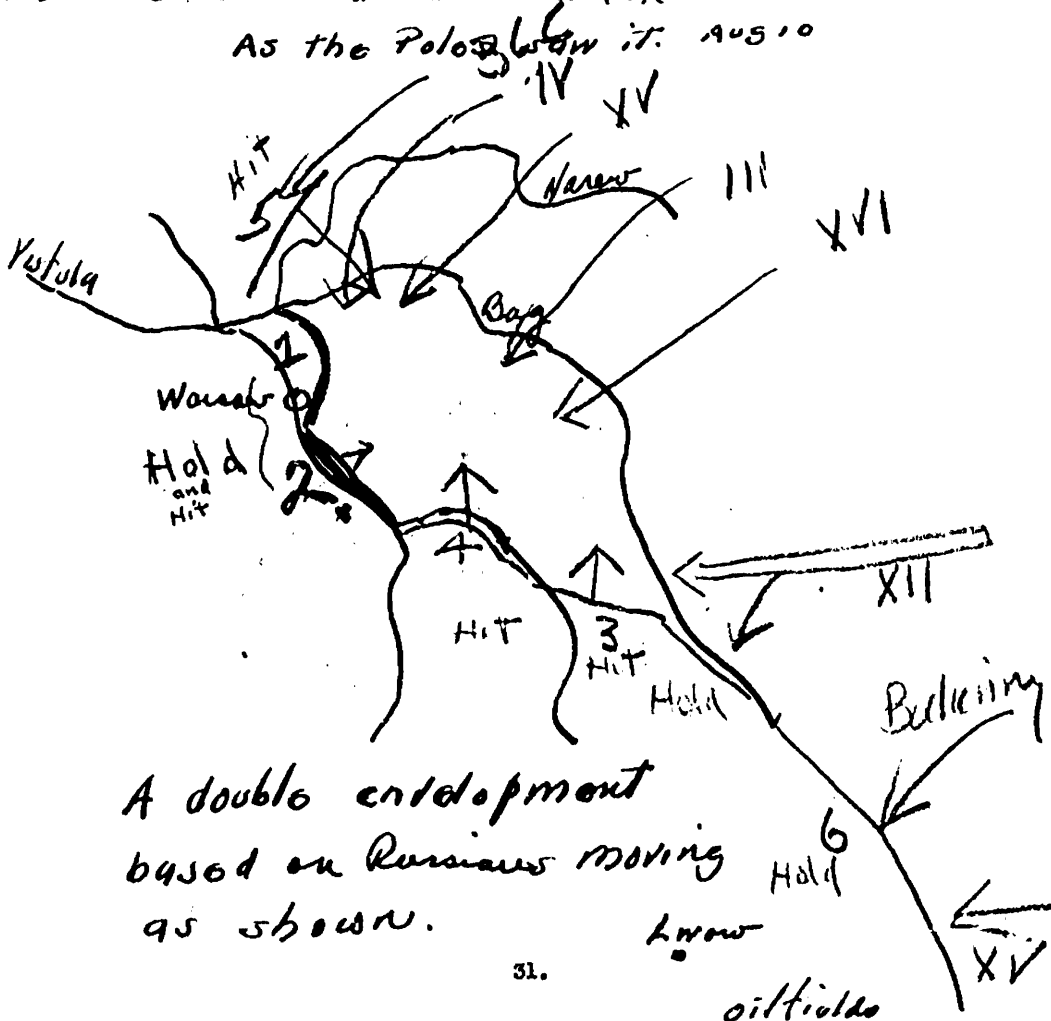
The 3rd Army will defeat the enemy's attempts at effecting a crossing over the Bug in the vicinity of Wladimir - Wolynski and to the north thereof. Later on the mission of the 3rd Army will call for energetic cooperation with the forces making the main effort, moving up gradually between the Wieprz and the Bug in the direction of Parczew or even Biala.

The Southeast Front (Group of Armies), commanded by General Iwaszkewich, is required to protect the entire province of Galicia up to Krylow on the Bug, incl., and to the line of the

(19)
Vistula P. 132

Dniestr and the Rumanian frontier. (19).

As the Poles show it: AUG 10



THE EXECUTION OF THE PLAN OF AUGUST 6TH AS
MODIFIED AND SITUATION OF AUGUST 12TH.

The regrouping and withdrawal phase which was adopted in order to gain time in building up reserve and effecting the necessary battle dispositions was conducted without incident. However, General Sikorski, on visiting the area of the inteliend operations of the 5th Army on August 10th, found that a false idea was being entertained of the general situation and of the possibilities on the left wing of the Polish front. The seriousness of the situation was being realized for the first time. Sikorski states:

"The left wing had been refused from the Polish-German frontier. The Bolshevik flood breaking through the wide open breach between Pultusk and oriental Prussia rolled towards the west with such rapidity, that the 5th Army could not fill its mission, nor reach the objective defined by the last two orders of the Commander-in-Chief and the Commandant of the front. At that moment, the 5th Army could not yet enter into action, because it was busy organizing on the lines hardly agreed upon and detachments of Russian Cavalry were debouching on the west of the Modlin-Mlawra railroad. We could no longer talk of holding successfully the Narew and Orzyc crossings, and oppose the outflanking of the left wing of the north Polish front as General Headquarters desired. It was no longer possible to protect the Ciechanow-Pultusk line, as was ordered by the Commander, nor even the Modlin-Mlawra railroad, mentioned in the instruction of the 10th of August since that line was in the hands of the 3d Cavalry Corps."

In other words, the plan for the double envelopment was out, due to the Russian envelopment of the Polish left. Sikorski took command of the 5th Army August 11th with headquarters at Modlin.

SITUATION AUGUST 12TH

Map No 5

Instead of as the Poles visualized it (see sketch page 31), the situation on August 12th, the situation was as shown on Map No. 5. At any time from between the 12th of August and the 15th of August Toukhatschevski could have crushed the Poles.

On the 13th he ordered Budienny to attack in the direction of Lublin, directly on the rear of the Pilsudski mass of maneuver. Budienny did not obey this order until the 19th, 6 days later, because he was determined to capture and loot Lwow. (20)

(20)
Sikoraki
P. 13 Chap.4

Likewise had the 4th Russian Army enveloped the rear of the 5th Polish Army rather than continue its movement westward the Poles would have been annihilated.

PILSUDSKI'S ACTIONS AUGUST 12TH AND 16TH

Map No 6
Map No 7

Pilsudski left Warsaw on the night of August 12-13th and established his headquarters at Pulawy beside those of the 4th Army. He anxiously awaited the developments of the situation and on August 16th, with the situation as shown on Map. No. 6, he launched his counter-offensive. The Russians had blundered into the trap. And when sprung, the effects were immediate and remarkable. (See map).

STRENGTH OF OPPOSING FORCES AUGUST 16TH

SOVIET FORCES		:	POLISH FORCES	
		:		
IVth Army	28,000	:	Group of Wloclawek	12,000
XVth Army	26,000	:	5th Army	34,000
IIIrd Army	20,000	:	1st Army	38,000
XVith Army	20,700	:	2nd Army	12,000
Group of Mozyrz	<u>8,000</u>	:	4th Army	23,500
Total	102,700	:	3rd Army	<u>25,000</u>
		:	Total	144,500
XIIth Army	22,500	:		
Vth Army cavalry. 30,000	:	:	6th Army	22,000
XIVth Army	<u>18,000</u>	:	7th Army, Ukranian ..	<u>24,000</u>
Grand total	173,200	:	Grand total	190,500

**Com on p 25 (extracted by Com on from
Pilsudski's narrative p 265)*

STRENGTH OF THE ARMY OF MANEUVER AUGUST 16TH

AS GIVEN BY SIKORSKI

	:	:	:	:	:
	: Bayo-:	Sabers	:	Machine	Guns
	: nets :		:	Guns	:
4th Army, General Skierski	:25,700:	950	:	450	: 98
(General Redz-Smig-	:	:	:	:	:
3rd Army, (ley(attack group)	:17,000:	3,451	:	298	: 89
(General Zielinski :	:	:	:	:	:
(corps of observa-	:13,600:	2,060	:	239	: 83
tion)	:	:	:	:	:
Total	58,300	6,481	:	998	270

ANALYSIS (PILSUDSKI versus TUKHATCHEVSKI)

Pilsudski regardless of minor blunders, had achieved two great essentials for success: 1. Surprise. 2. A maneuvering mass on the flank of the enemy directed at the enemy's lines of communication. 3. He was able to, through the force of his personality, to stick to his basic plan and make it work. He did not trust to chance, he commanded the maneuvering mass himself.

Toukhatschevski, on the other hand, had as good, if not a better strategic conception, but was unable to force his will upon his subordinate commanders. Therein lies the difference between the two. When Toukhatschevski set his armies in motion by his orders of August 8th, he at the same time lost control. Unable to meet the changes in situations through this lack of control, he was doomed to defeat.

Both commanders based their decisions on what they believed would be the intended operation of their opponent rather than on that of the opponent's capabilities. Pilsudski believed that the Russian mass would be sent against Warsaw. He did not take into consideration, initially, a strong threat against his left flank which was well within its capabilities. Toukhatschevski seems to have underestimated his opponent's recuperative power and ability to take a counteroffensive. His fault lies not so much in his conception of what to do but in the execution.

It would seem that Pilsudski's mass of maneuver was small compared to the force as used, initially, on the ~~defensive~~ ^{offensive}. In the final analysis Pilsudski won the battle because he struck with

complete surprise at the enemy's flanks and rear. The size of the force was not the criterion in this case although, as we have seen, it was sufficient. It was the unexpectedness of the blow from a supposedly demoralized foe that turned the tide and won this brilliant success for the Polish Army.

The battle of the Vistula strikes the imagination deeply. The conception started from a situation so compromising that, to many military men, it seemed hopeless. It was unexpected, it was simple, and it produced perfect results.

(21)
Canon P. 46

Sixty-six thousand prisoners, two hundred and thirty guns and a thousand machine guns fell into the hands of the Poles. (21)

On June 28th, 1923, the Polish Diet solemnly proclaimed that "Joseph Pilsudski, both as Head of the State, and as Commander in Chief, has deserved well of his Mother Country."

It is a superb reward, which Pilsudski had well earned.

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- Lord D'Abernon (British Ambassador in Berlin) was invited to
 proceed to Poland, in conjunction with a similar French Mission,
 as a special envoy to advise His Majesty's Government on
 questions arising out of the conclusion of an armistice between

Poland and Russia. This was while the Russians were advancing on Warsaw.

Vistula

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